

BROKE

interview by Lady Muse

"I was down at a drain one day and there just so happened to be a blue K-Mart spray can just sitting there all by it's lonesome. I picked it up, had a bit of a scribble and that was it - I was hooked". -Broke on his beginnings

Born and raised in Canberra, Australia, it was 1984 when the influx of films such as 'Beatstreet' etc first came to the attention of the then barely-in-his-teens boy. Many had dubbed this Hip Hop 'thing' to be merely the latest fad, and though Hollywood was capitalising on exactly this what these movies (thankfully) did was become vehicles on an international scale, sowing seeds of inspiration within future innovators via five elements of what has now become one of the largest youth subcultures on the planet. The practise of B-Boying displayed an intense physical energy which appealed to many and it was through observing such skills on movies such as the one mentioned and video clips riding on their coattails that kids such as Broke and Seiz begun making their first moves towards a life long love affair with B-Boying. The two also felt a strong connection to it's sister element, Graffiti, especially Broke. "I didn't really know what I was doing at the time" recalls Broke, "but I enjoyed the risk, the ego thing - seeing my name up and all that. I suppose I just enjoy(ed) the freedom of the art, (working with) no boundaries, no rules". His focus was initially on characters with Seiz doing letters. Broke was his pseudonym at the time "good letters, good to tag", but is now used primarily for his B-Boy persona. 1988 saw the boys make the move from Canberra and Brisbane with their family. This was where the 'B-Boy Allstars' were based, a crew at the time very high in skill and devoted to it's element. Upon meeting the 'Allstars' both Broke and Seiz begun getting serious about their moves. "There used to be weekly sessions where we would perform at a place in Brisbane called the coffeeshop, which of course, also hosted many a writer's bench". Later in the same year the brothers asked their Grandparents for a loan and 1989 saw the first issue of 'Hype' magazine hit the shelves. Initially a bi-monthly magazine, it's focus was primarily was on Graffiti and B-Boying. It barely paid its way, but the sheer love of sharing the culture with like-minded individuals spurred the mag on to the 29 issues it holds to its name today. Previously, whilst still living in Canberra, Broke had been arrested on a few occasions for Graffiti. Paying money fines was as hardcore as it got at that time. This was to reoccur in Brisbane being busted twice more. Penalties of community service and suspended jail sentences were handed down but none of this could deter him and his love for the art. It was around this time when he and his good friend, the late Avske (RIP) begun KOC - Keep On Crushing, or as it was first know, Knock Out Crew. "We just wanted to try and get a tight crew together where everybody trusted each other, a crew of writer's who just concentrated on the artform". This was the stage of Broke's life when his visual incarnation as 'Exit' begun taking it's place. "Exit was and is very personal" Broke explained. "Exit - there was no Exit". A lot of negative situations tarted arising and leaving a forcible impression maybe to question where his life was heading and that maybe it was time for change. Unfortunately for some people he knew they didn't have the luxury of this decision in their grasp. Exist shows up now and than but this is "more of a statement. I try to send a subtle message through my work rather than (just) writing my name". 1995 saw both Broke and Seiz make the move down here to Sydney. It was here where the newly formed Rapid Fire crew was to expand.

Rapid Fire was basically about refining the still existent KOC by taking it's most skilled writers and pooling them to form a tight collective unit. The concept has also grown to include DJ/Turntablist Mako (Dharma Bumz) and MC/B-Boy Morganix from Sydney band Metabass 'n' Breath who is a 'very positive person, great to work with'. Ensuing also during this time has been work with the Glebe Youth Center (where he ran the Center's shop 'Curb'), the KOC website (Big up to Fenix for all the work) and hosting the first of 'Taboo' earlier this year, a night showcasing local Graf artists work of many varied mediums (photography, sculpture, woodcarvings, collage etc.). Before we ended our meeting, Broke broke it down. "From all this" he told Crouton "I found out what Hip Hop was about. For me, when this all started I loved it, I worked at it - the Graf, the breaking, but I didn't really know what Hip Hop was about until I went down the negative road and discovered myself as an artist. I knew what those kids in New York were going through, cos all of that (the hard times) was my life. Hip Hop is a positive movement. All I've got now is positivity and I know there is positivity in Hip Hop, it's an art form about about skills and excelling yourself. The only spot that's illegal is Graffiti. They say Graffiti is an eyesore? Well, I see advertisements as an eyesore. Ad agencies are worse than we are, polluting our visual views by putting that stuff in our faces. At least there is some human spirit behind Graffiti and it's not (solely) for the dollar". True indeed. The latest issue of Hype Magazine is currently available through all good stores stocking your Hip Hop needs. For those wanting to peep KOC and Rapid Fire flix the website address is;

<http://www.zip.com.au/~fenix/>